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S E C R E T LIMA 005440

SIPDIS

FOR WHA A/S SHANNON AND INL A/S PATTERSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/21/2015

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [ASEC](#) [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [PE](#)

SUBJECT: SENDERO IS CHANGING STRATEGY: WHAT IT MEANS FOR PERU AND FOR US

REF: A. LIMA 5397

[B](#). LIMA 5335

[C](#). LIMA 5203

Classified By: Ambassador Curt Struble for Reason 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) I believe that the armed Sendero Luminoso factions in the Monzon and VRAE valleys have changed both their strategic objectives and tactics in a way that has implications for our counter narcotics work and anti-terrorism interests. The Toledo Government fully doesn't realize this yet. We will help them get to that realization. When they do, both of us are going to have to make some adjustments.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) The separate Sendero columns under Artemio (Monzon valley) and Alipio (VRAE) never went away when SL was beaten elsewhere in the country. We do not have evidence that the two groups are directly coordinating with one another nor that they have significantly expanded the number of combatants. We do know that they have built a formidable network of auxiliaries\*locals in these cocalero zones, who provide layers of security for the full time combatants and who gather intelligence on what the police, military, and alternative development workers are up to.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) When they were less certain of local support, these two columns would mount one or two ambush raids per year and quickly run to ground. The change in tactics we see is that they are mounting ambitious and well-planned ambushes or attacks on isolated fixed detachments, melting away for a few days, then doing it again somewhere else. This heightened ops tempo reflects confidence that their backs are covered by the local population. Recent reports indicate that the Alipio faction is digging up arms caches, and their communication links are more active. We don't yet know whether the cached arms are needed for special operations or whether Alipio has decided to recruit auxiliaries into his standing base. The change in tactics points to a new strategy \*- to push GOP authorities out of the area by making it too hot for them to wander in, let alone stay.

[1](#)4. (C) Toledo does not want to be known as the President who let terrorism get back on its feet. At present, this has produced a dysfunctional response: public denials that anything has changed coupled with orders to the police to catch the terrorists ASAP. The police leadership can't bring itself to admit that it doesn't yet have the intelligence nor capability to do that, so is reduced to looking busy; it's throwing men into the zone who stumble about under the leadership of generals who are not communicating with one another. We need to help the GOP remember what it painfully learned in the early 1990s: You'll beat the bad guys if you harden your defenses, patiently build your intelligence network, integrate a civic humanitarian component into your security policy and make decisions about who to put in charge of the troops based on ability rather than institutional politics.

[1](#)5. (C) Though we just developed our eradication plan for 2006, we are going to have to look at it again in light of the security situation. I'm also going to insist that Toledo and Prime Minister Kuczynski give well-informed approval of it. I believe they will agree to push back at this effort to expel the state from the Monzon and VRAE, but they need to reassure their security forces that resolve won't vanish if the latter get their nose bloodied during the election campaign.

STRUBLE